

REMARKS

Applicants hereby submit an amendment to the claims for purposes of continued examination as previously requested in the paper filed 01/06/03. The prior amendment filed on 01/06/03 which was deemed nonresponsive due to the representation of process claims is hereby withdrawn. Claims 1-14 and process claims 22-24 have been canceled. Independent claim 15 has been amended. Claim 25 has been added. Thus, claims 15-21 and 25 are subject to continued examination.

ART REJECTIONS:

As set forth in the final rejection mailed August 6, 2002, the sole basis for rejection of independent claim 15 (and all claims depending therefrom) is that such claims are obvious in view of U.S. Patent 3,683,921 to Brooks et al.. Continued rejection on this basis is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested at this time. Cancellation of claims 1-14 is believed to obviate all other grounds for rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that Brooks et al. provides no teaching or suggestion of a nonwoven composite of substantial thickness and density in which multiple layers of nonwoven fibrous material are held together by a dual mechanism of adhesive sandwich layers and interlayer fiber entanglement with fibers from different layers of nonwoven fibrous material passing across one or more layers of adhesive. Rather, as best understood, the article in Brooks et al. utilizes no fiber entanglement after the adhesive is applied. Thus, fibers would not be entangled between the adhesive coated layers.

As best understood, the article in Brooks et al. starts with the manufacture of a reinforced nonwoven fabric in which layers (22, 28) of fibrous material (12, 18) are entangled with a grid netting (24) of grid material (14). The resulting laminated structure (33) is then passed to an adhesive applying apparatus (34) such as a rotatable print roll or the like to pick up a desired amount of bonding agent from a trough or tank. The bonding agent is then dried or cured. Thus, the reinforced nonwoven fabric (10') is covered by the bonding agent. The

reinforced nonwoven fabric (10') is then laminated to other similar coated structures (FIG. 4) by the application of heat and pressure. However, as best understood, this lamination does not involve any entanglement between the various layers of reinforced fabric (10').

As best understood, the structure in Brooks et al. will be mass of fiber and reinforcement layers all encapsulated and adhered together by a binding agent. While the binding agent will bridge between the individual layers of the reinforced fabric (10'), no fibers will span these bridges. Within the individual layers (10') the binder is applied across the exterior and thus does not form a discrete sandwich layer between fibrous layers. Conversely, as illustrated in the present structure, the sandwiched layers of adhesive are bounded by substantially adhesive free fibrous zones thereby giving rise to discrete sandwiched adhesive layers. Fibers from adjacent layers pass through these discrete sandwiched adhesive layers. Thus, regardless of whether the comparison of the presently claimed construction is made to the overall laminated structure (39) in Brooks et al. or to the individual layers (10') making up this structure, the features of the claims do not appear to be present.

CONCLUSION:

For the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that all claims stand in condition for allowance. Prompt allowance and passage to issue is therefore requested. While Applicants have attempted to address all outstanding issues, in the event that any issue remains unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney in the hope that such issue may be resolved in an expedient and satisfactory manner.

While no extension of time is believed to be necessary, to any extent as may be required, a request for such extension is hereby made. Authorization is hereby provided to deduct any fee necessary for such extension of time or otherwise required for the acceptance of this paper from Deposit Account 50-1424.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this communication is being facsimile transmitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office at 703-872-9311 on April 21, 2003

James M. Robertson